ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

In a central system for receiving reports of utility usage from a number of remote meters, a provision is made for assuring that a received report has actually been transmitted from a meter that has been registered with the central system. During the registration process, the meter transmits its public cryptographic code to the central system. With each report of utility usage, the meter sends a version of a message encrypted with its private cryptographic key. The central system decrypts this message with the meter's public key. If it matches an unencrypted version of the message it is known that the meter sent the report. The unencrypted message may be generated by the central system and transmitted to the meter in a request for a report, or it may be generated by the meter and sent along with the encrypted version.

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